

'A different story had it been dry' says Darvill

DAGENHAM END WYCOMBE'S F.A CUP DREAMS

Horseman's miss the turning point?

Wycombe Wanderers 0, Dagenham 2

WYCOMBE WANDERERS' F.A. Cup aspirations spluttered to a halt at mud-bound Loakes Park on Saturday. This was, above all, one match the team could not afford to lose in order to keep faith with their suffering supporters.

But they failed miserably. The Wanderers slumped to an almost humiliating fourth qualifying round defeat at the hands of an Athenian League side.

Admittedly the conditions were far from congenial for playing good football. Driving rain beat down on the pitch for nearly an hour before the start. Within 15 minutes the surface resembled a quagmire as players slipped, slid and churned the mud into slush.

The weather favoured Dagenham, a strong and powerful side. Their players were able to plough through the mud, while on the other hand, Wycombe's small and nimble players, could not adapt themselves to the conditions.

But even more disturbing, was Wycombe's mental attitude to the game. It was certainly not in line with that of an important cup-tie. One could sense Dagenham's eagerness to do well, whereas Wycombe displayed no sense of purpose and urgency—even when they were behind—behaving at times as though this was a pre-season friendly. There was no drive or energy anywhere in the side—except, perhaps, for Charlie Gale.

A disappointed Barry Darvill commented: "On the day they were better than us. But while not trying to detract from Dagenham's performance, I cannot help feeling it would have been a different story on a dry surface. I know this will sound like sour grapes, but this is how I feel."

LATE CHANGE

Wycombe were forced to make a late change from the side that triumphed over Barking, when John Beck reported with a cold. Peter Eyres was drafted into the side—his first senior outing since September 26.

For the first fifteen minutes Wanderers were slightly on top but Dagenham looked more dangerous in front of goal.

The visitors nearly took the lead in the seventh minute. Greene—a constant source of danger—made space cleverly, after rounding Gale, before firing against the crossbar.

Wanderers' rearguard looked far from happy against the visitors' inside-forward trio of Greene, Bass and Morris who, although looking at times rather clumsy, displayed some neat touches at crucial moments.

Dagenham sized up the situation and adopted the policy of cracking the ball downfield quickly giving chase, while Wycombe insisted on playing the ball far too close, and often their passes became stuck in the mud.

Five minutes before the break Wanderers carved out their first real clear-cut opening. Merrick put Horseman in possession, and from Tony's cross, Samuels headed over.

Seconds later Horseman put Worley away with a peach of a pass, but the winger elected to go outside the back instead of cutting inside for a solo effort. His low cross was gathered at the second attempt by Huttley.

Almost immediately Dagenham scored. Centre-forward Bass moved out on to the left-wing, glided past Eyres and his low cross reached the lurking Greene. Although Maskell did well to parry his first shot, Greene seized on the rebound and crashed the ball into the roof of the net.

TONY HITS POST

Wanderers suffered atrocious luck directly after the interval. Horseman, taking advantage of Willingham's poor back-pass, which put Huttley in difficulties, saw his shot cannon against the right-hand post. A goal at this stage might well have turned the game in Wycombe's favour.

Les Merrick, who had worked hard throughout the match, missed a glorious chance of equalising. From a Holmes corner the ball went straight to him standing five yards out. But instead of shooting, Les trapped the ball by which time a defender had blocked the way.

Dagenham put the result beyond doubt in the 62nd minute. A goal which appeared to drain the last ounce of spirit from Wycombe. Pudney pushed a pass through for Greene to stab the ball home.

After this, little was seen of Dagenham's attack as they channelled back into defence using offside tactics to full advantage. However in the closing minutes they ventured out into attacking mood once more as Greene's clever chip was tipped on to the crossbar by Maskell.

But by then Wycombe had lost heart.

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell; P. Eyres, I. Rundle; B. Baker, V. Faulkner, C. Gale; L. Worley, K. Samuels, L. Merrick, A. Horseman, S. Holmes.

Dagenham: I. Huttley; B. Smith, G. Dudley; J. Daniels, J. Willingham; D. Moore; F. Pudney, P. Greene, T. Bass, D. Morris, R. Drake.

Wycombe 0 Dagenham 2

CRISPER FINISHING by their lively inside forwards gave Dagenham a well-deserved victory in this injury-stricken F.A. Cup battle.

Wycombe were well served in attack by Merrick and Horseman, but missed several chances before Greene put Dagenham ahead five minutes before the interval.

Despite fierce Wycombe pressure in the second half another opportunist goal from Greene in the 64th minute settled the issue.